

# WORKERS WORLD

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NOV. 11, 2010 Vol. 52, No. 44 50¢

## FBI frame-up & racist conviction in Boston

# Community defends City Councilor Chuck Turner

By Frank Neisser  
Boston

On Oct. 29 a predominantly white and suburban federal jury falsely found African-American Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner guilty of one count of attempted extortion and three counts of lying to the FBI.

The case was based on an undercover sting operation and a cooperating witness who had passed bribes for years, and who himself declared Turner to be innocent in interviews in the Boston Globe. The witness condemned the FBI and U.S. Attorney's office, saying he thought they were conducting a corruption investigation, but that he had been used to bring down two strong progressive African-American politicians, Turner and State Sen. Dianne Wilkerson, while no one else was touched. He only testified against Turner under threat of being jailed for contempt of court if he didn't.

This guilty verdict is a reflection of an alarming, expanding racist conspiracy to oust African-American elected officials by demonizing them in congressional hearings or in the courts with various charges of ethics violations, especially corruption. In reality, these officials are singled out for who they are, for the disenfranchised communities they represent and in some instances, like Turner's, for their radical politics.

More than 200 community residents, activists and supporters expressed their total solidarity with Turner at a rally in front of his district office in Roxbury on Oct. 30, saying, "We stand with Chuck Turner! Say no to FBI/U.S. racist frame-up! Chuck is innocent! U.S. government guilty! The verdict is the crime!" Roxbury is a predominantly Black community in Boston.

The jury never got to hear from more than 80 witnesses who were prepared to testify to Turner's selfless service to the community, asking nothing for himself.

For every day of the councilor's two-week-long trial his supporters packed the court room, forcing the U.S. District Court to provide a second courtroom for the overflow. Beginning with Turner's arrest two years ago the community has understood this attack to be a political one on the entire African-American community and its right of self-determination to choose its own leaders.

Supporters poured out by the hundreds in rally after rally. Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, founder of the International Action Center, came to Boston on Dec. 17 and stood next to Turner and condemned the nationwide pattern by the U.S. Attorney's offices and the FBI of going after elected officials of color and progressive officials to remove them from office based on a political agenda.

An online petition demanding all the politically mo-

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tivated prosecutions of progressive politicians and politicians of color be dropped and that the prosecutors be prosecuted has generated over 35,000 e-mail messages to Obama administration officials and congressional leaders. Support for Turner could not have been clearer than in the 2009 City Council race, in which he won reelection with more than 60 percent of the vote.

### Strongly refusing to compromise his politics

At the Oct. 30 rally, Turner began the program by thanking his supporters and saying it was their support that gave him strength and serenity from the beginning.

Turner specifically recognized the Boston Workers Alliance and the Boston School Bus Union as being the core of his support throughout. He spoke from the School Bus Union sound truck, which had led many motorcades through the community in support of him.

Turner blamed U.S. Attorney Michael Sullivan and the FBI for his frame-up. He expressed his excitement at the progress the African-American community has made in electing more people of color to at-large positions on the City Council. He spoke of having organized all of his life for the liberation of African-American people. He spoke of the corruption of a system that was built by unpaid slave labor in both the North and the South, and cited the fact that the prison industrial complex is the fastest growing industry in today's economy.

Turner invoked Shay's Rebellion against bankers' control of the U.S. government in the late 1700s, saying that the U.S. Constitution has been illegal from the start and protects only the rich and the banks. He called

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# MUMIA

## Must Not Die

# RALLY

For more information: Free Mumia Coalition (NYC) 212.330.8029 www.freemumia.com • International Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal 215.476.8812 • International Action Center 212.633.6646 www.millions4mumia.org

NYC Bus Tickets for Nov. 9, \$15 round trip. On sale at the Solidarity Center, 55 West 17th Street, Fifth Floor (between Fifth and Sixth Aves in Manhattan) on weekdays from 5 to 8 pm. Call 212.633.6646  
Mumia's hearing is at 2 pm, Philadelphia Federal Courthouse, 601 Market Street

## Tuesday Nov. 9 12 Noon 6th & Market Philadelphia

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Chuck Turner speaks to community supporters at Oct. 30 rally in Roxbury.

WW PHOTO: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

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# Labor activists condemn FBI raids

*The Committee to Stop FBI Repression is convening a national meeting in New York City on Nov. 6 at 6:30 p.m. Everyone who is interested in building the movement against FBI raids and the grand jury attempt to criminalize anti-war and international solidarity activists is invited to attend. For information, see [www.stopFBI.net](http://www.stopFBI.net)*

*The following letter has been written and posted at [www.stopFBI.net](http://www.stopFBI.net). Initial signers included Richard Berg, past president, Teamsters Local 743; Phyllis Walker, president, AFSCME Local 3800; Cherrene Horazuk, chief steward, AFSCME Local 3800; Peter Rachleff, labor historian, Macalester College; Gladys McKenzie, field representative, AFSCME Council 5; Joe Burns, labor attorney/negotiator; and Dave Riehle, former Local chairman, United Transportation Union Local 650.*

Sisters and Brothers:

On Sept. 24, the FBI carried out coordinated raids on the homes and offices of 14 anti-war activists in Minnesota, Illinois and Michigan. During the raids the FBI confiscated everything from computers and mailing lists to children’s drawings and photos of Martin Luther King.

Ten of the 14 victims of the raid are union members in good standing, among them three members of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers Local 3800, University of Minnesota; one member of Teamsters Local 320 (U. of Minn.); a member of Education Minnesota; and the chief steward of Service Employees Union 73, University of Illinois-Chicago.

All are well-known and respected activists who, according to FBI spokespersons, were targeted because of their role in seeking justice for workers and other oppressed peoples throughout the world. In addition to having their homes invaded, they were subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury. They have not been arrested or charged with any crime.

By its nature, a grand jury is a dressed-up fishing expedition. Those called to testify are not allowed legal representation during their testimony. If they refuse to cooperate, they face imprisonment, jeopardizing their jobs, homes and families. If they agree to testify, they give credence to an illegitimate fishing expedition.

Every American has the constitutional right to advocate and organize for change in the foreign policy of the United States. These activists are entitled to a presumption of innocence under the U.S. Constitution. No acceptable justification or evidence has been presented for these raids and subpoenas, and there is no reason to believe any will be forthcoming.

## To protest fracking

# Environmentalists crash Rendell’s press conference

In an attempt to stave off criticism for failing to secure a state tax on natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale areas in Pennsylvania, out-going Gov. Ed Rendell staged a press conference on Oct. 26 to announce he was signing an executive order for a moratorium on leasing new tracts in state forest land to companies for drilling.

As part of the background for this event, moderate environmental groups were invited to stand behind the

*Continued on page 3*

Four days prior to the Sept. 24 raids, the Office of the Inspector General of the United States revealed that the FBI has systematically and illegally spied on political activists; that FBI Director Robert Mueller lied to Congress about details of the surveillance; and that agents frequently confuse civil disobedience with “domestic terrorism.”

From the Industrial Workers of the World’s (IWW) fight for free speech in the 1910s to the major labor-inspired civil liberties court decisions of the 1930s, the labor movement has often been in the forefront of defending the right to speak and protest. Trade unionists understood that without the ability to speak out, union efforts would be crushed.

Of necessity, the fight for civil liberties went hand in hand with the fight for workers’ rights. What we see in these raids and grand jury subpoenas is reminiscent of the Palmer Raids and J. Edgar Hoover’s COINTELPRO. The FBI and Department of Justice have long histories of exploiting public fears in order to disrupt trade union, civil rights and anti-war organizing.

Across the country organizations and individuals are standing together to protest the U.S. government’s attempt to silence and criminalize activism. Confronting power and privilege has never been popular in the United States. Anyone who has gone through a bitter strike knows all too well how the courts, the media and the government line up against striking workers. That’s why the trade union movement must be at the forefront of defending the right to dissent, as it historically has been.

We are writing to ask you to join us in taking a stand in support of our sisters and brothers who are facing this witch hunt. Unions across the country are passing resolutions denouncing the FBI raids and calling for an end to the grand jury investigation. A sample resolution is at [stopfbi.net/resources/trade-unionists](http://stopfbi.net/resources/trade-unionists), as well as a sign-on letter for individual union members. Please introduce the resolution at your upcoming meetings.

To sign on to the letter, send your name, title and whether it is for ID purposes only to [labor.stop.fbi@gmail.com](mailto:labor.stop.fbi@gmail.com). If you would like somebody to speak about the raids at your meeting, contact Cherrene at 612-940-0660 or [cherrene@afscme3800.org](mailto:cherrene@afscme3800.org). For more information, go to [www.stopfbi.net](http://www.stopfbi.net).

We are also asking for donations to help with the costs of legal defense. Checks can be written to: Committee to Stop FBI Repression and mailed to P.O. Box 14183, Minneapolis, MN 55414.

An injury to one is an injury to all! □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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# Anti-death penalty protest gets a boost — another exonerated person

By Gloria Rubac  
Austin, Texas

With the release from death row of an exonerated Anthony Graves just three days before the 11th Annual March to Abolish the Death Penalty, the crowd that gathered at the Texas Capitol in Austin on Oct. 30 was in high spirits. Graves, an African-American man from Brenham, Texas, was wrongfully locked up for 18 years. He was declared innocent and freed to his loving mother, family and friends on Oct. 27.

Six men who almost took their last steps to the executioner's gurney proudly led the annual Texas march to chants of "Texas says Death Row, We Say Hell No!"

The excited crowd of around 500 people was at times spirited and happy yet also angry and militant. It has been exposed in recent months that Texas Gov. Rick Perry was responsible for executing an innocent man, Cameron Todd Willingham, in 2004.

His mother, Eugenia, gave a message shown on a big jumbotron screen, thanking the crowd for rallying that day and supporting Todd. "All of us are working together to abolish the death penalty and to make Todd's dream come true."

Shujaa Graham was on death row three years before the California Supreme Court threw out his conviction. He is a passionate fighter for abolition who had tears streaming down his cheeks as he told the crowd, "No state in America executes more people than Texas. I'm here, wounded by the blows of capital punishment, but not slain, and I say to you Texas, arise and fight this now!"

The other five death row exonerees who led the march with Graham were Curtis McCarty, who did 22 years in Oklahoma; Ron Keine, two years in New Mexico; Greg Wilhoit, five years in Oklahoma; Gary Drinkard, almost six years in Alabama; and Albert Burrell, who did 13 years on death row in Louisiana.

Dozens of families and friends of those on death row brought signs and banners for their loved ones, including Robert Garza, Juan Ramirez, Rob Will, Rodney Reed, Randy Halprin, Louis Perez, Jeff Wood, Cleve "Sarge" Foster, Howard Guidry, Paul David Storey and Umberto Garza. Reed's brother also brought a huge container of Texas barbecue to share with the crowd.

Lawrence Foster, the grandfather of former death row prisoner Kenneth Foster, attended even though his grandson has had his sentence commuted to life. Foster, who is 83 years old, told the crowd to never give up, to always fight for justice

because that is what saved his grandson's life just hours before his 2007 execution was to take place.

The only Texas gubernatorial candidate who opposes the death penalty, Deb Shafro with the Green Party, participated in the car caravan from Houston to Austin, filling her car with activists and putting anti-death-penalty signs on her car.

Six cars left Houston's S.H.A.P.E. Community Center early Oct. 30 with neon-colored posters on all sides of their cars and created a stir at every gas station and rest stop along the highway. Shafro has participated in many protests opposing capital punishment and it is a strong part of her platform.

Minister Robert Muhammad, a regional representative of the Nation of Islam, based in Houston, moved the crowd to cheers when he proclaimed, "America says it is fighting for freedom around the world, yet we have no freedom right here for poor people and working-class people. The government can bail out the banks but cannot bail out our people. They want to execute Mumia Abu-Jamal, but we, the people, must continue to fight to save his life!" Muhammad was a friend and spiritual advisor to two innocent men, Shaka Sankofa and Odell Barnes, and he witnessed their executions in 2000.

"As I always say, it is better to be guilty and rich in Texas than to be poor and innocent. Let's keep up the fight and abolish this death penalty!" Muhammad concluded.

Elizabeth Gilbert told the crowd that activists can end executions. She began to fight to prove the innocence of Todd Willingham in 1998 after she was given his name for a pen pal on a bus filled with Houston activists going to Philadelphia for the Millions for Mumia rally in 1998. Gilbert was recently featured on the PBS Frontline program and written about in the New Yorker due to her work for Willingham.

Njeri Shakur, a leader of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement, was "energized" by the march and rally. "Being among these exonerated men, men who very well could be dead now, was empowering. Seeing all the families fighting



Oct. 30 march in Austin, Texas.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

for their loved ones was so moving. The release of Anthony Graves was a wonderful victory, but we still have so much work to do. We will win if we continue to pro-

test and educate and organize the people against this injustice that terrorizes the poor. And we must act now to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!" □

## Community stands strong with Chuck Turner in face of racist frame-up verdict

*Continued from page 1*

for a new people's movement to build economic democracy for working people of all races and backgrounds. The crowd was also addressed by Minister Rodney X of the Nation of Islam and by longtime African-American City Councilor Charles Yancey.

Yancey called Turner "our leader" and equated the FBI attack on him to earlier FBI attacks on W.E.B. DuBois, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Cultural expressions of solidarity were provided by The Foundation and Gabriella Ballard.

Love and support for Turner runs so deep in the Roxbury community that the Boston Globe was forced to cover the rally with a picture and a full account showing the depth of community support for him. The Globe also printed a separate article interviewing person after person from the community saying they knew the councilor to be a selfless dedicated servant of the people, who, alone among city councilors, has maintained a district office in the heart of Roxbury, paying the expenses out of his own pocket.

But the agenda of the real, racist rulers of the Boston establishment could be seen in the Boston Globe Oct. 30 editorial on the verdict. It revealed what they revile him for — that he dares to speak truth to power, pointing the finger at the Boston Police chief for the crimes of the police in the community, daring to say that U.S. soldiers had been guilty of the rape of



WW PHOTO: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

City Councilor Chuck Turner

Iraqi women, and telling his constituents the truth that the corporate rulers don't want them to hear.

Turner's supporters are determined to conduct a broad and tireless campaign to see that he not spend a single day in jail. Turner is urging supporters to write letters to Federal District Judge Douglas P. Woodlock asking that he be put on probation rather than spend time in jail, so that he can continue his work as a city councilor. These letters should be sent to City Councilor Chuck Turner, Boston City Hall, One City Hall Square, Boston MA 02201.

He is also asking supporters to write to Boston City Council President Michael Ross and the members of the Boston City Council at the same address, and ask them to delay any vote on Turner's continued tenure on the Boston City Council until after he is scheduled to be sentenced on Jan. 25. Further information can be found at supportchuckturner.com. □

## Environmentalists protest fracking

*Continued from page 2*

governor with signs and banners. However, word must have gotten out to more groups than intended, as several that showed up repeatedly interrupted Rendell with chants calling for a complete moratorium on all drilling in the state and for an environmental impact study on the wells already drilled. The highly questionable practice of hydraulic fracturing or fracking involves millions of gallons of water laden with toxic and carcinogenic chemicals.

Rendell's pronouncement was seen by some as too little too late. Since September 2008 Rendell's administration has leased over 725,000 acres of the 2.1 million acres of state forest land despite warnings from his own officials. Only

about 1.5 million acres of state land, or 60 percent, sit atop the Marcellus Shale. Drillers see the forests, and the shale beneath it, as ripe for exploitation, while state officials see the potential for billions of dollars in land leases as a way to balance strapped state budgets.

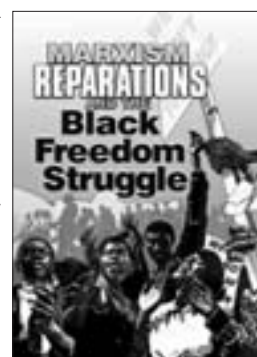
Much of the land covered under Rendell's order was "too environmentally sensitive to drill on," according to Jan Jarrett, CEO of the environmental group PennFuture. "The horse is already out of the barn, but at least they're shutting the door before anything else gets out," added John Baillie, senior attorney for the statewide group. The next governor could reverse the moratorium in January.

— Betsey Piette

## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

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## Struggle continues as

# Whittier sit-in ends in victory

By Rakhee Devasthali  
Chicago

After occupying the Whittier Elementary School field house also known as La Casita for 43 days, the Whittier Parent Committee has ended the occupation in a victory Oct. 28. They received, as they demanded, a written statement from Chicago Public Schools CEO Ron Huberman saying that CPS would not tear down the community center to replace it with a turf field.

Still, the Whittier parents are making it clear that the letter from Huberman is not the end of this historic struggle.

CPS has suggested a space inside the already overcrowded school, and has alluded to sacrificing a new computer lab for the library. School officials are attempting to make the case that Whittier is not overcrowded since it is filled to 76.7 percent of its capacity, not the 80 percent that is considered overcrowded.

Additionally, CPS spokesperson Monique Bond said that once parents incorporate as a non-profit, CPS will lease the field house for \$1 per year and parents can build the library in the field house but that it must meet code and safety requirements.

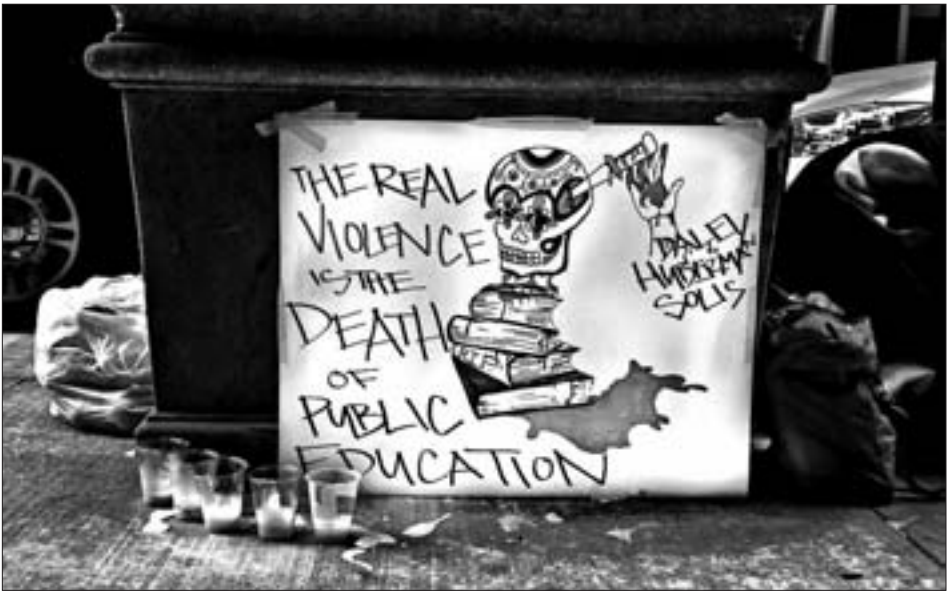


PHOTO: ZACHARY KREMIAN

In response to these evasions of the real issue — quality education for all children — the Whittier Parent Committee continues in negotiations with CPS and has issued statements with the following clarifications.

1. The location of the library has not been determined or agreed upon by the Whittier Parent Committee.

2. The parents did not agree to the library being built inside of the Whittier school as the letter from CPS states.
3. We also want to note that the Whittier Parent Committee did not agree to be responsible for all the repairs or other maintenance issues mentioned in the letter. During this meeting we made it clear that as the leasing agent, it is CPS's responsibility to ensure that the

building is up to fire codes and safe for the children.

4. We want to make it clear that we are only ending the sit-in portion of the struggle. The Whittier Parent Committee remains in control of the field house and the programming that is currently taking place in the field house. We are not abandoning the field house nor are we ending our fight for the library. The negotiations will continue!

The Whittier Parent Committee and their community supporters remain a force with which CPS must reckon, and an inspiration to people around the country fighting to save the hard-won right to a quality public education.

Sticking to their principles the parents say, “We want to ensure that CPS and our elected officials give us, the community, the student body and the parents what we deserve!! The fight continues so that we can ensure that we have a quality education for all children!!”

*Sources for this article along with ways to show support for the Whittier struggle can be found at [www.saveourcenter.com](http://www.saveourcenter.com).*

## After hospital closure

# Community fights for health care

By Dolores Cox  
New York

Following the closing of the landmark St. Vincent's Hospital on the westside of downtown Manhattan, the community continues to fight for its replacement.

On Oct. 17, at the site of the padlocked and boarded-up hospital, about 1,000 protesters gathered for a “100 Days Without a Hospital” rally called by the Coalition for a New Village Hospital and sponsored by many local organizations. Demonstrators included community residents, nurses, doctors, clergy and area merchants.

Protesters demanded restoration of a new full-service hospital. St. Vincent's was the primary care center for the area, serving approximately a half million residents as well as 815,000 private-sector workers, college and university students, and millions of tourists. It was a full-service hospital with a Level 1 Trauma Center emergency room. Its mission was no denial of care to anyone — everyone had a right to health care.

St. Vincent's patients included the poor and uninsured. It was one of the city's

first treatment centers for HIV/AIDS. It had a psychiatric building for in-patient and out-patient service; pediatric, geriatric, pulmonary and infectious diseases clinics; numerous medical departments; and a relatively new cancer care building.

Since the official closing of the hospital on April 30, promises to provide an urgent-care facility in its place have not materialized. Protesters have complained about the passivity and silence of public health officials and politicians when the closing was proposed, throughout the process and currently. They declared that the city's billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg and city and state health commissioners have ignored the area's medical needs.

Sign-carrying demonstrators loudly chanted, “Give us back our hospital!” and “No condos!” One sign read, “Stop the terror of greed!” Last year's rumor that the hospital's prime site may be converted to luxury condos by real estate developers now appears to be a reality for some of the buildings.

A doctor at the rally said, “The Department of Health has pursued an utterly bankrupt policy, totally disregarding [its]

legal and moral responsibilities, and has abandoned the population.” Overcrowding and dangerous conditions are being reported in hospitals in other parts of the city, which now have to serve thousands more patients. Because of traffic patterns, medical crises and emergencies have become life threatening when patients must be transported to other areas.

### ‘We will not be silent!’

“According to politicians we don't have the money,” said Eileen Dunn of the New York State Nurses Association. “But we can't put a dollar sign on patients' lives. We'll do whatever it takes for as long as it takes. We need a revolution!” Dunn said some staff have not yet received severance or back pay.

Barbara Crane, president of the National Federation of Nurses, voiced her disbelief that St. Vincent's was allowed to close. She shouted, “We will not be silent! Take to the streets!”

Community activist and attorney Yetta Kurland, whose firm filed a lawsuit in August against the State Department of Health, said, “We're here today to let our elected officials know that we are not go-

ing to be quiet. We're going to continue to show up until we have full restoration of emergency services and hospital care here at the site of St. Vincent's.” The suit was subsequently moved to Federal Bankruptcy Court where the judge cancelled it. The same judge also denied the April request for a stay in the hospital closing. Kurland is appealing that ruling.

The hospital is being charged with mismanagement of tax returns, \$10 million per year executive salaries, \$17 million for “management consultants” and \$300,000 for golf outings. At the time of its closing the bankrupt hospital was many millions in debt.

In August the local community board passed a resolution that the land could only be used for a hospital. The protestors are demanding the resolution be honored and this issue be addressed.

The Coalition for a New Village Hospital is determined to continue the fight, saying they will settle for nothing less than a replacement hospital on the site. More meetings and rallies are planned. The coalition requests that supporters call or write their public officials to insist on the need for the hospital. □

# Why employer credit checks are wrong

By Tsehai Hiwot

It is now 2010 and the U.S. economy is in the midst of the worst recession since the 1920s and 1930s. As a result, many people are out of work, there are record foreclosures, and many people are accumulating debts or cannot pay their bills. Job searches are hindered by racism, age discrimination and in many cases a poor credit history. Your credit can prevent you from getting loans, mortgages or even a job.

When a friend told me years ago that she was applying for a second job, she said she was informed that the company was doing a credit check. This did not make

any sense; what does a person's financial background have to do with their ability to do a job? Secondly, how can you pay bills and debts if you are unemployed?

Being in debt should not be a moral issue or a rule of judgment because it can happen to anyone; these days it is like an epidemic because of the economy. Prolonged unemployment, identity theft and errors on your credit report can keep you out of work. Employers do not care if any of these things play any role in the potential employee or worker's situation. According to USA Today, 13 percent of employers use credit reports in their hiring decisions.

The state of Oregon has banned the use

of credit history checks by employers. Its Legislative Assembly passed House Bill 1045 and the governor signed it into law in March. Seventeen other states including New York, New Jersey and Connecticut also have bills pending, but they have been sitting around since July 2009. Sen. Steve Cohen, a Democrat from Tennessee, has proposed the Equal Employment for All Act; this bill would prevent credit checks with only a few exceptions.

As a consumer and worker, you do have rights and there are things you can do to address this problem. Write your state legislators and urge them to sign the bill into law; it bars employers from using your credit history to deny you a job. Sev-

enteen states have this bill. If your state does not have the bill, urge your state lawmakers to write one. Be aware that the Fair Credit Reporting Act requires employers to request your written consent to do a credit check.

Employers must also let you know that adverse actions can be taken against you for information in your report. Do not refuse. If you do, you could be eliminated from the hiring process immediately. If an employer denies you a job because of your credit history, you have a right to know; you have 60 days to request a copy of the report in question and learn which credit bureau supplied the information.

Stay on top of your credit history and



## On the Picket Line

by Sue Davis

### Hilton Hotel workers strike in S.F., Hawaii

Workers at the two largest Hilton Hotels went on strike in mid-October. On Oct. 13, 850 workers at the Hilton Union Square in San Francisco, members of UNITE-HERE Local 2 who have been working without a contract since August 2009, walked out at 4 a.m. and stayed out until the same time on Oct. 19. On Oct. 14, 1,500 members of UH Local 5 began a five-day strike at the Hawaiian Village. The workers are protesting the chain's attempts to lock housekeepers, cooks, dishwashers, bell staff, and food servers into recessionary contracts with higher health care costs, frozen pension contributions and increased workloads. But why is Hilton making such demands when its owner, the private equity firm Blackstone Group, just received a huge government bailout? The Federal Reserve agreed a few days before the strikes to accept payment of \$142 million toward the \$320 million that Blackstone owed the Fed. The remaining \$178 million will be picked from taxpayers' pockets. As the Wall Street Journal noted, Blackstone's revenues are projected to increase 50 percent to \$2.7 billion, with executives receiving a 12 percent salary hike. No wonder the workers are fighting mad about such in-your-face corporate greed and contempt for them and their families. As WW reporter Joan Marquardt in San Francisco noted in a personal e-mail, "The union maintained a large, vocal picket line through the entire six-day strike, with other workers and community activists joining them daily." Support the workers' campaign to make Hilton "Share the Recovery!"

### Benefit for Detroit Orchestra strikers

Hundreds of people packed a church in the Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills on Oct. 24 for a benefit concert by the musicians of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, who have been on strike since Oct. 4. Seventeen members of the Cleveland Orchestra joined them in a show of solidarity. (That orchestra staged a one-day strike earlier this fall that won a pay freeze rather than a 5 percent cut.) Management of the DSO had demanded a 33 percent pay cut with no insurance benefits, no pension contribution and additional unpaid community events. But even though the musicians, represented by Local 5 of the American Federation of Musicians, were willing to accept more than \$9 million in salary and benefit cuts, with a 22 percent salary cut next year, management refused to negotiate. As WW reporter Martha Grevatt in Detroit observed in a personal e-mail, "The situation shows that no amount of skill workers may possess can prevent them from facing the determination of capital to lower wages."

take steps to remove errors. The credit bureaus are big business and they don't care about workers who have financial problems. They are another tool in the racist, capitalist, imperialist monster that runs our society today. People who cannot pay their bills should not be punished by being denied the very thing they need to pay them — a job.

Denying someone the right to a job is the same thing as denying humans the essential things they need to survive: food, shelter and health care. This is unjust, immoral, evil and stupid. This vicious cycle needs to be stopped. A job is a right not a gift! □

# People's Assembly for Jobs & Justice launched in Baltimore

By Steven Ceci  
Baltimore

A very determined and diverse group of Baltimore workers — young and elderly, jobless and those still working — launched a new movement for a "People's Assembly" at an Eastside church in Baltimore on Oct. 30.

Some came to testify about the impact the economic crisis has had on their lives and others to make broad proposals on how to turn it around.

Larry Holmes, national coordinator for the Bail Out the People Movement, called for an uprising for jobs on the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in the form of protests and civil disobedience. "This may have to be expanded to budget cuts and a number of other issues," he stated.

He analyzed the upcoming elections and urged that no one feel demoralized or down about the possible outcome, pointing out to the crowd that the Tea Party was weak compared to the real storm that was coming — that is the organized anger of the working class, particularly the most oppressed. "You," he said, pointing to the audience, "are the coming storm. You are the future."

Holmes indicted capitalism as a system and called for its abolition, to cheers from the audience.

Nnamdi Lumumba, the Maryland statewide coordinator of the Ujima People's Progress Party, which is seeking ballot status and describes itself as a party of African workers, joined the call for people's power.

Maria Allwine, Green Party candidate for governor, decried the system's corruption, and Max Obuszewski, an anti-war activist and spokesperson for the Iraq Pledge of Resistance, explained the connection of military spending and the entire military machine with the suffering of people in Baltimore city.

### Major tomato growers sign with Immokalee

The relentless campaign to better the working conditions and lives of tomato pickers conducted by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers scored two high-powered wins in mid-October. Pacific Tomato Growers, one of the country's largest growers, and Six L's Packing Co., the largest in Florida, agreed to pay a penny more a pound for a bushel of tomatoes and to improve the working conditions of the mostly Latino/a and Haitian immigrant workers. Both companies engage in modern-day slavery, which CIW has pushed the Justice Department to expose and prosecute. As Kari Lydersen notes in *In These Times*, "The fact that growers are in quick succession now signing on with the coalition shows a historic sea change in farmworker-employer relations — even as the coalition and their allies continue to target tomato buyers, including the Florida-based supermarket Publix, Kroger, Trader Joe's and Quiznos. (Oct. 22) Not only will another penny raise the workers' income from about \$10,000 to \$17,000 a year, but the agreements include a complaint resolution system, a participatory health and safety program, a worker-to-worker education process, and an auditing system to ensure accurate payments. CIW started its Campaign for Fair Food in 2001; since then all the major fast-food outlets have signed on. To take action to support the campaign, go to [www.ciw-online.org](http://www.ciw-online.org). □



PHOTO: MAURICEMORALES@GMAIL.COM

Jasmine King, a high school student, explained to Workers World newspaper that this was the first time she had spoken publicly. She stood tall and poised as she presented a statement that she had carefully prepared, calling for jobs and education for youth, not jails.

The meeting afforded many others in the community a forum to put forth their demands and make proposals for action.

Leo Burroughs Jr., chairperson of the Coalition for BGE [Baltimore Gas and Electricity] Re-regulation and the Transit Riders Action Coalition, spoke. He has been fighting for a moratorium on utility hikes and shut-offs. Burroughs is also president of his tenant association and heads an ad-hoc committee to restore cuts in cost-of-living adjustment increases to social security.

Wayne Mobley, a West Baltimore resident, put a face on the demand for a moratorium on utility shutoffs. He and his disabled companion, who take care of small children, have been without electricity or heat for several months. They have been fighting BGE on their own but have now joined others.

#### State workers, steelworkers represented

Renee Washington, a state worker, proposed that the People's Assembly join a picket line on Nov. 1 to support state workers who are being replaced by low-wage contract workers and forced on furloughs. She described how people who united together saved her home from foreclosure.

Robert Price, a steelworker from Bethlehem Steel, was outraged and angry. He spoke about saving jobs at the Sparrows Point plant and the need to march on Washington.

Helen Bell, an SSI recipient, gave a moving account of what it means to be poor and how difficult it is to access help. Lee Patterson, a Workers World Party member, gave a moving indictment of capitalism, as he explained how he and his family suffered due to cuts in his wages that ultimately led to the loss of his apartment and car.

Patterson is now living in a homeless shelter in Washington, D.C., but is determined to stay active in the struggle. His testimony at this People's Assembly is proof of his vow.

Education was on the agenda too. Alan Rebar, a Baltimore city teacher, spoke about teachers' rights. Vicky Harding, a member of Baltimore's Think Tank, along with Curtis Bard, spoke about the racist use of test scores in Baltimore's public schools.

"Soul Salsa" performed spoken word. The group is composed of Gato Martinez-Bentley and Jerry Peliquin from the D.C. Capitol Jobs Coalition. The group began the assembly with drumming. Martinez-Bentley expressed his enthusiasm for the

movement that was launched. He plans to help form a People's Assembly in Washington, D.C.

Sharon Black from the Job Is A Right Campaign and Andre Powell, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees delegate to Baltimore Metro AFL-CIO Council, co-chaired the People's Assembly. Black explained Baltimore's particular history, which led their group, the Job Is A Right Campaign, to conclude that the people needed to build people's power as an alternative power to the current "dead-end political structure."

The Assembly concluded with many resolutions: to support the state workers' picket line on Nov. 1; to attend Justice Sunday to demand jobs, not jails and oppose the building of a new youth jail; to hold a protest in November to extend unemployment benefits; and to support the national call for "an uprising for jobs." Other resolutions called for giving general and specific support for independent political parties, including Ujima People's Progress Party, the Green Party and the Freedom Party; for continuing the movement for a People's Assembly, with a call for a Statewide People's Assembly in late winter or early spring; and demanding a national jobs program and moratorium on foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs. □

### Woodlawn cemetery

## Workers win union

The Bronx, N.Y., Woodlawn Cemetery workers Band of Brothers had a union election that was held on Oct. 28 in the service yard of the cemetery. The workers made a huge statement to both management and the corrupt company union USWU-IUJAT Local 74/811, headed by Sal Aladeen, by voting for Teamsters Local 808.

It was democracy at its best with a wide margin of victory, 34 to 3 out of 38 workers. After a year long struggle organizing the workers, dealing with management's discriminatory practices and with the absence of union representation the Band of Brothers stood strong against the ambassadors of greed and the board of oppressors.

We will continue to unionize in preparation for negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement. The current collective bargaining agreement expires on Dec. 31. This has been an overwhelming struggle, one we take seriously for all in the working class and we hope to inspire others in similar situations. We will continue our efforts to help strengthen the working class in the hopes that we can be a brick that is added to the foundation of the labor movement. This is just the beginning.  
— By Band of Brothers anti-racist leader



## ‘Capitalism in Crisis’

# Why are things so bad and what is the way out?

Following are excerpts from Part 1 of the document “Capitalism in Crisis,” prepared by Fred Goldstein for discussion at the upcoming National Conference of Workers World Party, to take place Nov. 13-14 in New York. Go to [www.workersworld.net](http://www.workersworld.net) to read the entire document and get more information about the conference.

We are entering a rare period in history, a period in which a world historic social system — the capitalist system — is showing all the signs and symptoms of being in a profound crisis from which it cannot extricate itself by economic means alone.

We do not have a crystal ball. Marxism is a science and its revolutionary practice is an art. It is not a school of prophecy. Marxism can unearth the tendencies at work in the capitalist system based upon knowledge of its laws and careful observance of the course of events.

However, the capitalist system is unplanned and anarchic. The giant monopolies that span the globe engage in cutthroat competition carried out in secrecy, both from their corporate competitors and from the capitalist governments. There is no way to get an accurate preview of economic developments. This will only be possible once there is a consciously, collectively planned, cooperative world economy.

Everyone repeats that this is the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression. This is true enough. But this statement does not clarify major questions. It tells the workers and the vanguard nothing about the nature of this specific crisis other than how bad it is (which they already know). Merely reiterating the severity of the crisis does not tell why it is so bad, how it got to be this way, what is in store for the masses and, above all, what is the way out of the crisis. If this is a crisis of the bourgeois system,

then the only way out for the workers and the oppressed, once they get galvanized for struggle, is the complete overturn of capitalism.

There is a profound difference between a particular capitalist crisis and a historic crisis of capitalism as a system. The Great Depression began as a cyclical crisis, the collapse of a stock market bubble, with an underlying crisis of overproduction. But it soon revealed itself to be a crisis of the system. The present crisis is showing similar signs. What began in December 2007 had the basic elements of a classic capitalist crisis, in the sense that it was caused by capitalist overproduction, even though it was precipitated by a financial crisis with the bursting of the housing bubble. Overproduction and bursting of bubbles are characteristic of every capitalist crisis. But this crisis is obviously far more than a cyclical crisis.

This crisis has important features that indicate a qualitative difference from previous post-WWII recessions, including the 1980-1982 crisis. It is growing clearer every day that the capitalist class has no answer to the growing mass unemployment.

If capitalism cannot reduce the reserve army of the unemployed during an upturn, then it means that the economic mechanism of capitalism is irrevocably broken. The system, just as in the 1930s, cannot solve the unemployment crisis by economic means alone. Its normal functioning as a system of boom-and-bust exploitation has run aground. It had a gigantic bust but there is not, and will not be, a following boom. At best, the bust will be followed by stagnation with enduring and growing mass unemployment; at worst, an even greater bust is yet to come.

This jobless recovery is by far the worst in a series of three jobless recoveries over the last two decades. The jobless recovery is a new phenomenon in U.S. capitalism. It first arose after the 1991 downturn and

caused concern among bourgeois economists. This concern was dissipated by the collapse of the USSR and the boom in technology that followed at the end of the decade. But the phenomenon returned with a vengeance — a far worse jobless recovery — after the 2000-2001 downturn. The present jobless recovery is a disastrous continuation of this trend and far exceeds that of 2001-2004.

The significance of a jobless recovery is that capitalism recovers but the working class does not, even on the most minimal level. Business expands but employment does not. The failure of the capitalists to rehire the workers raises a barrier to the revival of the capitalist business cycle. The bosses won’t rehire because business is bad. And business is bad because the bosses won’t rehire.

The anemic growth of the economy during the “recovery” is being accompanied not by massive hiring but by continued layoffs. But hiring is the only way that workers can get money in their pockets again and buy the commodities they produce in order to fuel an upturn. The capitalist press refers to this as the “problem of the consumer.” But it is really a problem of capitalist overproduction, which reaches crisis points as soon as the recovery begins and chokes off any further boom.

In the last two decades, the effect of the boom part of the cycle on the working class has turned into its opposite. Capitalist recoveries have been increasingly accompanied, not by a relative labor shortage, but by continued high unemployment for a longer and longer time after each recovery and continued shedding of workers, especially from high-paying

This jobless recovery is by far the worst in a series of three jobless recoveries over the last two decades. The jobless recovery is a new phenomenon in U.S. capitalism. The significance of a jobless recovery is that capitalism recovers but the working class does not, even on the most minimal level. Business expands but employment does not. The failure of the capitalists to rehire the workers raises a barrier to the revival of the capitalist business cycle. The bosses won’t rehire because business is bad. And business is bad because the bosses won’t rehire.

and moderate-paying jobs through the boom period.

The problem has been created by the continuing restructuring of capitalism, nationally and globally, for the past three decades. Capitalism has been profoundly technologically restructured, creating a high-productivity, low-wage global structure. There is virtually no room left for further significant restructuring along any foreseeable lines.

It is becoming a crisis in which the system of exploitation, the bourgeois relations of class exploitation and private property upon which it is based, are coming into irreconcilable conflict with the further development of society. If this is so, then no bailouts, no stimulus packages, no financial manipulation and no restructuring can revive the system in the long run. □

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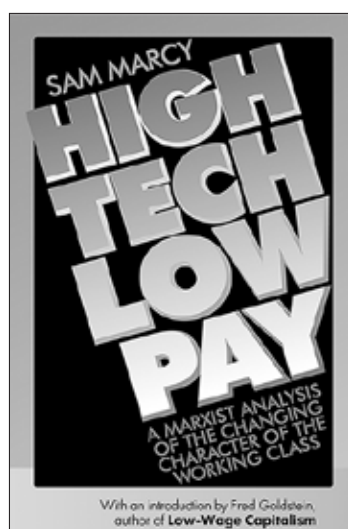
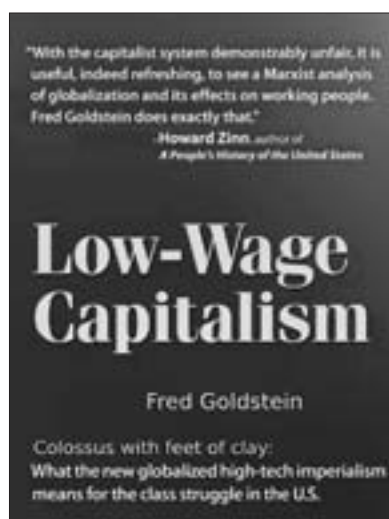
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Since the 1920s

# Communists, anti-racists are key worker organizers in North Carolina

*The following article is based on a talk given by Dante Strobino, a UE150 organizer, at the Oct. 23 Workers World Party Southern Regional Conference in Durham, N.C.*

Communists have our roots in North Carolina dating back to the 1920s. The Southern region of the U.S. was of particular importance to the Communist Party because 86 percent of African Americans lived here, and the CP felt Black liberation was a central step towards the overthrow of capitalism inside the U.S. Southern communists have spent many decades working to build unity between Black and white workers. Racism in the U.S. South is a central division that bosses worked hard to maintain in order to keep wages low and unions weak.

## 1920s: Loray Mill in Gastonia

Paul Crouch from Moravian Falls, N.C., was in the military in 1924 and joined the Hawaiian Communist League, for which he was jailed for 26 months in Alcatraz. The International Labor Defense League came to his defense, and he emerged from prison the first North Carolina CP member in 1927. After going to the Soviet Union, Crouch toured the South looking for organizing targets in order to build the party.

In December 1928, the Communist-led National Textile Workers Union announced plans to organize N.C. and made Charlotte its headquarters. The Loray Mill strike in 1929 in Gastonia was one of the best-known strikes in U.S. labor history.

The strike at Loray Mill started on Monday, April 1, 1929, after mill supervisors began firing workers who had participated in a union meeting. At that meeting, held the previous Saturday, NTWU organizer and CP member Fred Beal had counted the workers' votes, which unanimously favored a strike.

Gastonia Mayor Rankin then asked for help from the National Guard, which arrived on April 3. The strike continued to escalate throughout the month. Nearly 100 masked men destroyed the NTWU's headquarters on April 18, resulting in the NTWU starting a tent city on the outskirts of town that was protected by armed strikers at all times. The strike continued for a few months, but production picked back up.

On June 7, 150 workers marched out to the mill to call out the night shift. This demonstration was attacked and dispersed by sheriff deputies. Police Chief John Aderholt was killed in the scuffle and two officers, as well as a number of strikers, were wounded. Seventy-one strikers were arrested and 16 were indicted for murder. In September, after a mistrial had been called in that case, striker Ella Mae Wiggins was shot and killed while riding to a union rally. Seven men were charged with her murder (six of them employed by the Loray Mill). All were found not guilty.

Through the early 1930s the NCCP and NTWU kept up campaigns to organize workers, the unemployed and African Americans through unionization, electoral campaigns and struggles against legal lynchings. By January 1932, there were 300 party members in N.C. Active branches existed in Winston-Salem, Charlotte, Chapel Hill, Concord and many rural areas.



PHOTO: UE 150

Mental health workers rally at the Office of Administrative Hearings in Raleigh Sept. 20 when Judge Beecher Gray ruled five Black workers were fired unfairly. Pictured from right, UE150 members Cornell Hendrick (Central Regional Hospital), Ernestine Smythe (CRH), Dorothy Williams (CRH), Suzanne Bailey (CRH), Bernell Terry (CRH), Ben Carroll (UNC) and community supporters Brigid Flaherty (Pushback Network), Ajamu Dillahunt (NC Justice Center) and Dani Martinez-Moore (NC Justice Center).

## 1940s: Organizing R.J. Reynolds

By 1940 R.J. Reynolds operated the largest tobacco manufacturing facility in the world. Its approximately 12,000 employees (plus several thousand seasonal workers in the city's independent leaf houses) represented one of the largest concentrations of industrial workers in the region.

Two-thirds of the workers were African-American and more than half were women. Taking advantage of the window of opportunity that opened during World War II, the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers of America Union, Local 22, won collective bargaining rights at Reynolds and three smaller independent leaf houses in 1943. Local 22 helped spearhead the election of a Black minister to the Winston-Salem Board of Aldermen, the first Black candidate to defeat a white in the South since the turn of the century.

The local's brand of race-inflected "civic unionism" thus expressed the experience and perspective of its African-American members, who combined class consciousness with race solidarity and looked to cross-class institutions such as the Black church as a key base of support.

Although the company and the union finally reached a settlement on June 7, 1947, it proved to be the last collective bargaining agreement signed by the Reynolds Tobacco Co. Three years later, after a controversial National Labor Relations Board ruling that effectively disenfranchised Black seasonal workers and allowed lower-level white supervisors to vote in a recertification election, Local 22 lost the right to represent Reynolds workers.

In the 1970s there was a major organizing campaign at Duke Hospital in Durham, N.C. The Duke family made their money in tobacco, later expanded into the electric power industry and eventually endowed Duke University. Meanwhile, Howard Fuller and other Durham

activists in the mid-1960s had generated a variety of local organizations, such as Malcolm X Liberation University and the Student Organization for Black Unity. When these and other organizations all jelled at a national level into the African Liberation Support Committee in 1972, Durham's leaders were influential in this national movement. The ALSC had a strong Southern base, but also had action based outside the South.

The Revolutionary Workers League, a national Black communist pre-party formation, had a strong chapter in Durham that grew out of the ALSC through Black Marxist study groups. The white student movement was also moving towards radical and Marxist politics. In Durham in 1972-73 white activists formed two collectives — a health collective and a socialist feminist collective — both affiliated with the communist-oriented New American Movement. In 1973, the health collective became the Durham Organizing Committee. The DOC later split, some members entering a Marxist-Leninist collective and others, critical of a lack of democracy, formed the Durham People's Alliance.

By 1975, Black activists in RWL and white activists in DOC were moving in parallel, forming a joint study group and a strategy committee to discuss a union drive at Duke Hospital. Both agreed on the importance of unity of Black and white workers and both had members who were worker leaders in the union efforts. Later, DOC became the Communist Workers Party.

## BWFJ, UE organize in N.C.

Starting in 1981, Black Workers For Justice, a civil rights, labor and community-based organization, laid the foundation for forming United Electrical (UE) Local 150, the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union. BWFJ had as a cornerstone of its political program the

centrality of Black workers. This was a perspective shaped by revolutionaries who worked in the auto plants and other industries with large concentrations of Black workers.

It recognized that trade union consciousness would be narrow and only oriented to the economic issues, and wouldn't address the structural racism that saw Black workers being victimized by superexploitation at work and denial of real democratic rights in the larger society.

The year 2010 marks the 20th anniversary of the organization of the Consolidated Diesel Co. Workers Unity Committee. Members of BWFJ and other workers collected the signatures of 210 CDC workers demanding a paid holiday for Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, again bringing together white and Black workers to overcome racism caused by the bosses. The workers delivered the petitions to CDC management on Jan. 15, 1990.

This began an eight-month campaign for a paid holiday, which was won on Aug. 1, 1990. The CDC Workers Unity Committee then joined with the Bloomer Hill community to host the annual MLK Day celebration, first held in January 1991. This struggle helped attract UE to North Carolina. Short of enough votes to win a National Labor Relations Board union recognition election, the workers began organizing a non-majority union at CDC.

In the mid-1990s, housekeepers at the University of North Carolina formed the UNC Housekeepers Association, which struggled for decent wages and an end to the racism and sexism that kept the workers treated like second-class citizens. In 1997, UE organizers began to help the association develop deeper organizing skills. They held a mass march and eventually a statewide organization of front-line university workers. This statewide struggle led to many victories, including

*Continued on page 8*



## Providing work for artists during Depression

# Documentary highlights Federal Writers’ Project

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

The recently released documentary, “The Soul of a People: Writing America’s Story,” highlights the role of cultural workers during the Great Depression when they participated in the New Deal’s Federal Writers’ Project administered by the Works Progress Administration.

The film revisits the WPA’s provision of millions of jobs for laid-off industrial and service employees and its establishment of a program that hired writers, actors, painters, journalists, researchers and other creative artists to document the history and culture of the United States.

The documentary is based on David A. Taylor’s book, “Soul of a People: The WPA Writers’ Project Uncovers America,” which explores the FWP and sheds light on the U.S. government’s continuing failure to support cultural workers who seek to realize social change.

The reforms won through the WPA resulted directly from labor and community struggles waged during the Depression’s early years. In 1930 unemployed workers joined in mass demonstrations, and Unemployed Councils formed in many cities to demand jobs and fight against foreclosures and evictions.

During the Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt enacted emergency measures, which included the reorganization of the banking system and the initiation of a federal jobs program, in an attempt to save U.S. capitalism.

### Federal Writers’ Project work

The Federal Writers’ Project was established on July 27, 1935. It was directed by the journalist and theater producer Henry Alsberg and was later taken over by John D. Newsome. Both of them commissioned the compilation of historical studies, oral histories, books for young people and assorted ethnographic research projects.

The FWP employed more than 6,600 writers, teachers, researchers and artists. Their work resulted in the documentation of thus-far-unpublished aspects of U.S. political and cultural history.

A notable project was the American Guide Series which provided information on all 48 states as well as Washington, D.C.; Alaska, then a U.S. territory; and Puerto Rico, a U.S. colony. In every state an FWP committee was formed which sent out field workers taken from the unemployment lines.

Many of the FWP writers were labor unionists, left-wing activists, members of the Communist Party and other progressive organizations. Importantly, the FWP collected narratives of African Americans who had been enslaved prior to the Civil War.

Additionally, many of the blues and folk artists of the period made their first recordings through the work of Alan Lomax, who traveled through the South and recorded musicians such as McKinley Morganfield, known as Muddy Waters. In recent years, these documents and recordings have become available to the public.

Some of the well-known writers and artists who worked in the FWP included Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude McKay, John Steinbeck, Arna

Bontemps, May Swenson, Studs Terkel, Richard Wright, Margaret Walker, Dorothy West, John Cheever, Saul Bellow and Frank Yerby.

Nonetheless, overall the FWP employed very few African Americans. One possible exception was the Illinois Writers’ Project, which helped launch the literary careers of Richard Wright, Margaret Walker, Katherine Dunham and Frank Yerby.

The federal government ended support for the program in 1939, even though it continued under state sponsorship until 1943. A program of this scope and magnitude does not exist today in the United States, even though there are untold numbers of teachers, poets, scriptwriters, actors, producers, painters, musicians, sculptors and other creative cultural workers who are unemployed, with many living in abject poverty.

### Demand for federal jobs program including cultural work

The Bail Out the People Movement, the Moratorium NOW! Coalition and other organizations around the country are calling for the creation of a WPA-style jobs program that would employ, with decent wages and benefits, the 30 million to 35 million people who are unemployed or underemployed. The role of cultural workers is crucial within the movement for jobs and a living income.

In other societies, particularly under socialism, artists, athletes, educators, scientists and others are employed by the state and are guaranteed the right to pursue their creative capabilities. Within a capitalist society, artists can only make a living working outside their field of interest and specialization or if their cultural productions are marketable within the economic system.

The U.S. economic crisis has had a significant impact on popular culture. Radio and television stations restrict diverse programming in order to capture advertising revenue. Fewer musical artists are able to release their music and spoken-word material because the major recording companies only want to produce a select group of artists who sell millions of compact discs and therefore maximize corporate profits. Likewise in the book publishing industry.

This is why many musicians and cultural workers have taken to producing their own work independently of the large corporations. This movement, largely among youth, should be mobilized into local and national campaigns, which fight for jobs and income.

As the “jobless recovery” continues, leaving tens of millions of workers and oppressed people without employment, housing, healthcare and education, mass struggles must emerge to address the deepening class inequalities and corresponding cultural divide within the U.S.

For information on “The Soul of a People: Writing America’s Story,” see [www.smithsonianchannel.com](http://www.smithsonianchannel.com).



Writers Zora Neale Hurston above, Claude McKay, left

**The creation of a WPA-style jobs program that would employ, with decent wages and benefits, the 30 to 35 million people who are unemployed or underemployed. The role of cultural workers is crucial within the movement for jobs and a living income.**

## Since the 1920s

# Communists, anti-racists are key worker organizers in North Carolina

*Continued from page 7*

a major policy change that allowed workers to bring a co-worker (union steward) to grievance hearings. In 1999, more than 100 state and city workers, mostly university workers, came together to found UE Local 150, the N.C. Public Service Workers Union.

North Carolina and Virginia are the only two states with laws denying public sector workers the right to collectively bargain. The founding of the union finally gave rank-and-file workers the organizational beginnings necessary to overturn this Jim Crow law, passed in 1959 by an all-white legislature.

In 2001, the state of N.C. launched a mental health reform plan that promised to bring mental health patients quality care through finally enacting measures of the Olmstead Act stating that patients receive higher quality care if they are closer to home. The state’s Department of Health and Human Services used this as a basis to severely downsize all the state’s large psychiatric hospitals and developmental disability centers.

All the county-run beds, which employed more than 20,000 workers, were privatized. Since 2001, state hospitals have cut resident beds by more than 60 percent. This plan wasted more than \$400 million by allowing owners of the private facilities to overcharge the state for community services and to accumulate profits while hiring low-wage, often high-school-aged workers to provide services without adequate training or oversight.

UE Local 150 launched the DHHS Dignity campaign to lift up the voices of mental health workers during this crisis. Workers at Cherry Hospital in rural Goldsboro were central to the initial fight-back. Local 150 then launched an effort to build statewide strength and began organizing at several other DHHS facilities. One of the state’s four psychiatric hospitals, Dorothea Dix Hospital in Raleigh,

has been targeted for closure, but due to the resistance from UE 150 members at Dix Hospital and community allies, the hospital has remained open. However, in December the hospital will be reduced down to just 26 beds, less than a tenth of its 307 beds in 2001.

Workers throughout the DHHS psychiatric hospitals and mental retardation and substance abuse treatment centers are disciplined and often fired for poor job performance and “patient abuse,” but the cause is the awful conditions of their work: understaffing, forced overtime and lack of adequate training. This shows that the system is broken and that the workers are being scapegoated.

Instead of addressing the conditions, one-sided policies like zero tolerance were put in place by the governor. In 2008, UE Local 150 launched a campaign for a Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights. UE 150 members collected thousands of ballots from DHHS workers finding they had “no confidence” in the mental health reform plan and voted “yes” for a Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights.

Members of BWFJ also helped UE 150 plant roots among city workers in Durham, dating back to the 1980s. In 2003-04, UE Local 150 began organizing workers in other municipalities. Then, in September 2006, sick and tired of forced overtime without pay and lack of dignified work conditions, sanitation workers in Raleigh staged a two-day wildcat strike. This forced the resignation of the assistant city manager and the solid waste manager and won many gains for workers, such as an end to forced overtime, the option to be paid overtime, all temporary workers made permanent, along with many write-ups in workers’ files being taken out. UE Local 150 then again reached out to workers in several other cities to build a statewide organization of city workers, which now has active chapters in Charlotte, Chapel Hill, Rocky Mount, Raleigh and Durham. □



# Military-industrial-media complex ‘rewrites’ the Gaza war

By Joyce Chediak

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, the main U.S. media-watch organization, charges that the country’s two top newspapers, after this year’s attack by Israel on ships bringing aid to Gaza, suddenly “misremembered” what had happened in the 2008-2009 Gaza war. FAIR says the New York Times and the Washington Post “propagated an inaccurate historical context that serves to bolster Israel’s claims.” (June 21)

These newspapers are the most prestigious in the country. The New York Times sets the news agenda for the rest of the media.

What did they do?

Throughout the coverage of Israel’s May 31 attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, during which Israeli commandos killed nine people, these newspapers repeated as fact Israel’s bogus claims that it had begun its three-week onslaught on Gaza in December 2008 because Hamas was firing rockets into Israel.

Before the Gaza war, however, both newspapers had debunked this claim.

A Dec. 19, 2008, New York Times article by Ethan Bronner reported that Hamas had been “largely successful” in seriously curtailing rocket fire from Gaza. “Hamas imposed its will and even imprisoned some of those who were firing rockets,” wrote Bronner. An editorial in the Nov. 2, 2008, Washington Post said that, thanks in part to “a cease-fire deal with Hamas, Israel has been more peaceful in recent months than it has been in years.”

FAIR said, “Part of Israel’s strategy of defending its attack on the humanitarian flotilla has been to stress the dangers posed by Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip.” By taking it upon themselves “to rewrite relevant history,” the “Times and Washington Post gave this Israeli government argument credibility.”

A look at the casualty figures for the three-week war reveals where the “danger” really came from. The Palestinian jurists’ organization al-Haq reported that the Israeli military killed more than 1,400 Palestinians, 83 percent of them civilians, including 355 children. In those three weeks a total of 13 Israelis died. Four were killed by Palestinian rockets, three of them civilians. An additional nine Israeli soldiers were killed in Gaza, four of them by Israeli “friendly fire,” according to the Israeli government.

## Other major media who ‘forgot’

The Times and Washington Post were not the only major media to conveniently “forget” the facts behind Israel’s punishing onslaught on Gaza and warp them to provide justification for Israel’s later killing of nine people on ships delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. FAIR also cites CNN, USA Today, Fox News, NBC Nightly News, the Los Angeles Times, the San Francisco Chronicle and the Dallas Morning News for media rewrites of the Gaza war.

These media, FAIR says, downplayed Palestinian civilian deaths, the anguish of the survivors and the suffering caused by the destruction of Gaza’s infrastructure. They covered the deaths as merely “a public relations problem for Israel.” They also denied that an ongoing humanitarian crisis had been created by the bombing and blockading of Gaza. These newspapers, television networks and radio shows even blamed the Palestinian organization Hamas for Israel’s destruction of Gaza. (fair.org media advisories of January and March 2009)

While the establishment media occasionally report the real details of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, this coverage is sporadic at best. There is certainly no consistent attempt to be “fair” or to “give both sides.” On the contrary, the real relationship of forces — repeated, unprovoked Israeli aggression versus Palestinian measures of self-defense — if reported on at all, is quickly dropped by all the corporate media for a revision of history favoring the Israeli regime and vilifying the Palestinians. This revision is repeated again and again, at all levels of the media.

## Israeli lobby doesn’t ‘control’ U.S. media

Why has it been nearly impossible for the Palestinian people to get fair coverage in the establishment media?

Some say it is because Jewish people or the Israeli lobby “control” or “unduly influence” U.S. media outlets. But this is not the case. The real force behind this biased reporting is the huge aggregate of U.S. corporations that pull in mind-boggling profits from exploiting Middle East resources.

ExxonMobil, for example, the wealthiest company in the world, with important Middle East holdings in oil and natural gas, had revenues of \$477 billion in 2008. (CNMONEY, Jan. 30, 2009) It is only one of the U.S. oil giants operating in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Israel’s entire gross domestic product that same year was \$205 billion.

The oil companies and other U.S. corporations are calling the shots and the Israeli state works for them. What is Israel’s job? To be a watchdog for the oil companies.

Soon after the establishment of Israel, one of its most important newspapers wrote that “strengthening Israel helps the Western powers maintain equilibrium and stability in the Middle East. Israel is to become the watchdog. There is no fear that Israel will undertake any aggressive policy towards the Arab states when this would

explicitly contradict the wishes of the U.S. and Britain. But if for any reason the Western powers should sometimes prefer to close their eyes, Israel could be relied upon to punish one or several neighboring states whose discourtesy to the West went beyond the bounds of the permissible.” (Ha’aretz, Israel’s newspaper of record, Sept. 30, 1951)

These U.S. corporations don’t mind if Israel is blamed for the anti-Arab bias in the U.S. media establishment. It hides their own role. The corporate media help obscure the real relationship of forces.

## Bamboozling the public

The major media are welded to this corporate network in what has become a military-industrial-media complex. The media’s “job” is to keep the U.S. public from seeing that a few individuals and corporations reap billions of dollars by exploiting the people of the Middle East and bombing and blockading Gaza. These super-rich hate and fear the national liberation struggles, especially the Palestinian struggle, because the Israeli state, which ousted and replaced Palestine, serves U.S. finance capital so well.

The corporate media have a profit motive, too. They get ads and financial sponsorship from giant corporations. They have interlocking directorates with oil, arms and other companies that profit from Middle East occupations and wars. They use their vast conglomerates of newspapers, magazines, networks and entertainment companies to promote a political climate that favors profit-taking and to censor out news that interferes with that. The big media eagerly self-censor if it furthers their burning cause — making more money.

In 2008 ExxonMobil made \$1,300 in profits every second. For the military-



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industrial-media complex, this trumps the truth about Palestine.

*To be continued.*

## Penn forum

# Challenging the siege of Gaza

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

Huwaida Arraf was a witness to Israel’s May 31 attack on the Freedom Flotilla ship, the Mavi Marmara, when Israeli naval commandos killed nine Turkish activists. She gave a first-hand account on Oct. 27 to a standing-room-only meeting at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia sponsored by Penn for Palestine.

Arraf is the chairperson of the Free Gaza Movement and a co-founder of the International Solidarity Movement. She and Adam Shapiro, an ISM co-founder, reviewed the history of the flotilla movement that has challenged the siege of Gaza since 2008 and announced plans for a 2011 international flotilla.

Arraf described the high rates of unemployment and illness and the racial discrimination, ethnic cleansing and apartheid that are rampant in Gaza and throughout occupied Palestine. These horrific conditions led her and other activists to challenge Israel’s barriers, which have left Gaza residents in an “open-air prison.”

Israel’s siege and militarization of the borders made it very difficult to bring international delegations into Gaza to witness conditions, Arraf explained, so the idea developed to sail boats to Gaza to break the siege.



Huwaida Arraf and Adam Shapiro expose Israeli terror, Oct. 27.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

In August 2008 two small fishing boats filled with activists, unsure of Israel’s response, set sail for Gaza. Even though Israel cut off their communications, the boats got to Gaza after a 30-hour journey. Tens of thousands of people rushed to the port, many swimming out to sea, to greet the solidarity activists.

“We weren’t carrying tons of aid,” Arraf noted, “but [the people] treated us as heroes because it was the first time they had seen anyone succeed in standing up to Israel in challenging the blockade.”

Five more boat trips to Gaza were successfully carried out until December 2008 when Israel launched its deadly bombs and an invasion that killed more than

1,400 Gaza residents. That month, Israeli military vessels rammed, damaged and prevented an aid boat from reaching Gaza with medical supplies.

In June 2009 when former Congressperson Cynthia McKinney, Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire and 19 other activists bravely sailed to Gaza, Israeli naval commandos seized their boat, arresting all aboard.

Arraf explained that the international multivessel Freedom Flotilla was then planned. “We decided to go again, but rather than one small boat, we wanted to send a flotilla and appealed to other organizations to join us.”

*Continued on page 10*



# The elections — what they weren’t

The election returns are still coming in as we write this, so we reserve comment on those questions that can be clarified once there is more data. However, there are several important observations that can be made, even at this early hour.

This midterm election came as workers in the United States were trying to deal with a third year of major job losses, foreclosures and evictions, and a significant rise in poverty.

At the same time, the Wall Street billionaires claim to have turned the corner — on profits, not on hiring workers or on the general state of the economy. And so we can read once again about the millions and even billions of dollars channeling into the pockets of the already very rich, even while at least 30 million unemployed and underemployed workers literally don’t know when they’ll ever get a decent paycheck again and tens of millions more are fearful that they, too, can fall into the abyss. With their families, this adds up to a third of the population.

Where was this expressed in the election? If we look at the campaigns run by both Republicans and Democrats, how much hope could be gleaned from what they said?

Did any of them even whisper about the need for a government jobs program that would take the huge government revenues amassed from taxes on workers and spend them on hiring people into real jobs at real wages? That would have gotten a response. But who can get excited about promises that tax breaks to corporations and the rich will somehow produce jobs? Isn’t that what both Democrats and Republicans have prescribed over the last two years — and it hasn’t worked? So only the corporations that stand to make millions from these tax breaks are excited — and they’ve funded this election like money was water.

Considering all the hope expressed by the majority of voters in 2008 that racism could be overcome and discrimination and oppression be a thing of the past, did any of the “major” party candidates take a strong stand against the fear-mongering and scapegoating by Fox News and the Tea Party types? Did they stand up for the rights of immigrants, women, Black people, Latinos/as, Native people, Muslims, lesbian, gay, bi and transgender people? Or were they running for cover from the racist and xenophobic lies of the right-wing, even as the economic crisis takes its fiercest toll on people of color, devastating once-booming cities like Detroit and Cleveland?

The people of Iraq and Afghanistan are still under the gun, their countries occupied by foreign troops using futuristic weapons to keep the people from exercising their right to real self-determination — which can never be imposed by invaders and their political puppets. Does either “major” party admit to what so many people already know in their bones — that these are wars for oil; that Wall Street and the Pentagon have a vested interest in the region and will spend our young people’s lives and trillions of our dollars pursuing fabulous profits while budgets at home are cut to the bone and the environment is degraded even further?

Much has been written about how potential voters in this election, especially young people who were the strongest supporters of Obama in 2008, are disgusted, demoralized, anxious, disillusioned and scared. It has not been reported yet how this affected the turnout at the polls. Did many formerly Democratic voters switch to Republican — or did they just stay at home? Did some workers even wind up opting for Republicans out of fear and anger with the incumbents?

Either way, they will have their eyes opened soon. Whether it’s Republicans or Democrats who control the House and Senate, the layoffs will continue. The foreclosures will continue. Capital will continue to run to where wages are lowest and profits are highest. This crisis of capitalism is not going away and neither big business party has an answer for the working class.

In New York state, this election saw the emergence of a promising new party, the Freedom Party. It represents a break with the Democrats by Black and Latino/a forces that is reaching out to the masses on the question of self-determination for these oppressed nations. The party got tens of thousands of signatures to be on the ballot. Hopefully, it will continue to challenge the racist powers that be.

The way ahead is uncharted. But all of history tells us that material conditions determine consciousness. It was the wretched conditions for labor in the 1800s that led to the development of Marxism, scientific socialism, the first unions and the first international organizations of the working class. It was the whip of racist reaction that led to the movements for civil rights and Black liberation. It was the oppression built into capitalism that led to the struggles for women’s rights and LGBTQ liberation.

Now the whole working class in this country, including all its specially oppressed sectors that take the lead in consciousness and organization, faces a long, hard struggle against a vicious capitalist, imperialist system in decline. Breaking out of the political straightjacket of the two-party system becomes imperative as this class struggle intensifies.

In New York, three upcoming events will help push the envelope of struggle. The first two occur Nov. 6 at St Mark’s Church on the Bowery. From noon to 4 p.m., activists will meet for a regional conference building for an April 9, 2011, anti-war mobilization. Then, from 6:30 to 8:30, the first national meeting of the National Committee to Stop FBI Repression will be held. (see iacenter.org)

Threading through these problems and looking at what comes next will be the focus of the Workers World Party’s National Conference on Nov. 13-14 in New York. We hope to see you all there. □

# U.S. gov’t reveals spending \$80 billion on spying

By Gene Clancy

On Oct. 28 the U.S. government revealed it spent \$80 billion on intelligence for fiscal year 2010. That’s more than the \$53 billion the government spent on the Department of Homeland Security or the \$30 billion spent by the Justice Department, according to the White House Office of Management and Budget.

Of the \$80 billion, \$53 billion went to so-called “civilian” agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, and \$27 billion went to the Department of Defense, of which \$3.5 billion was spent in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The \$80 billion allotment is about the same as the total budget for the Department of Health and Human Services. Unlike the intelligence agencies, HHS must account for every penny spent. Until Oct. 28 the intelligence agencies did not even have to reveal the total amount of funds they spent.

The revelation was outrageous enough to provoke a lame response from Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who chairs the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which sets the intelligence budget and oversees policy.

“It is clear that the overall spending on intelligence has blossomed to an unacceptable level in the past decade,” said Feinstein. She admitted that the total intelligence budget has doubled since 2001. (Associated Press, Oct. 28) During this entire time, Feinstein was either the chairperson or the ranking leader of the committee, which is given regular briefings about all spending.

The government has voluntarily revealed the total intelligence budget only twice before, in 1997 and 1998 in response to a lawsuit. Then it was \$26.6 billion and \$26.7 billion, respectively, showing that the total intelligence budget has tripled in 12 years. No details of how the money was spent have ever been revealed; the government cites “national security” as the reason.

In addition to its usual skullduggery, intelligence agency activities include such

crimes as dropping assassination drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan and so-called “rendering” operations where suspects, more often than not ordinary citizens, are kidnapped and secretly flown to foreign locations where they are tortured.

## Military budget cover-up

Since the war in Vietnam, U.S. budget planners have devised a number of accounting tricks to hide the true costs of the many wars and interventions they have conducted. During the Bush administration, the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were taken out of the budget altogether.

While the Obama administration has put the costs of these wars back into the budget, it persists in other misleading practices. One of the main techniques is to meld Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid costs into the overall budget to make it appear that social services, not military spending, make up the largest share. Thus in the 2009 federal budget, Medicare and Social Security were shown as constituting 39 percent of the budget, while defense was pegged at 23 percent. (www.gpoaccess.gov)

This covers up the fact that Social Security and Medicare are self-contained, self-supporting programs, overwhelmingly paid for by taxes from working people. Unfortunately, recent administrations have regularly raided these funds to pay for their many wars and interventions.

An honest presentation of the federal budget, which includes the costs of past wars, including debt service and veterans’ benefits, and excludes Social Security and Medicare, would show military spending as constituting 54 percent of the budget and human services as a mere 30 percent. (www.ArmsControlCenter.org)

In 2009, 85 percent of federal tax receipts came from Social Security, Medicare and individual income taxes. A mere 7 percent were from corporate income taxes. The progressive movement must demand an end to the robbery of poor and working people to pay for illegal spying and murderous wars. □

# Penn forum on the siege of Gaza

*Continued from page 9*

“One of [Israel’s big lies] was that there were violent terrorists on the Mavi Marmara and that the other ships [in the Freedom Flotilla] were taken over peacefully. Not so,” stressed Arraf. Though they radioed Israeli forces that they were unarmed civilians carrying humanitarian aid and were not a threat, Arraf said, “They stopped talking and launched an attack on us.

“I was on the deck of another boat and saw the attack on the Mavi Marmara. Masked Israeli commandos using attack dogs also took over our boat, beat us and went after ... recording equipment. Our injuries were mild compared to what happened on the Mavi Marmara.”

## Freedom Flotilla II

“We are not going to back down or

[concede] that we can’t stand up to Israel’s military might. We have [called] for the Freedom Flotilla II for the spring of 2011. Thousands are calling us to take part. Not only do we believe that the blockade can be broken, but the entire colonial system of apartheid can be overturned,” Arraf concluded.

Shapiro told of the successful Viva Palestina 5 convoy of more than 150 vehicles and 370 people from 30 countries, carrying \$5 million in aid, that broke the blockade on Oct. 21.

He then detailed plans for the upcoming flotilla that will include ships from the U.S., Canada, Italy, Sweden, Turkey, Greece, South Africa, Belgium and Britain. Participants will include activists from Southeast Asia, Pakistan and India.

The growing movement has forced Israel to modify the blockade and has caused many performers to cancel concerts in Israel, Shapiro emphasized. “We are seeing this conflict being transformed. It’s no longer just Israeli soldiers turning guns against Palestinians, but wherever Israelis go around the world, they get the idea there is a cost. After 62 years of struggle, the situation is still desperate, but at this point momentum is on our side.” □

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## To counter resistance in Horn of Africa

# U.S.-European imperialists initiate joint military exercises

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A 10-day joint military exercise involving the European Union, the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and the African Union headquarters based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was recently uncovered in a series of press releases from the Pentagon and other sources. Labeled “Amani Africa,” the operation brought together the combined forces of the EU, the Pentagon and 120 African military components.

Ostensibly designed to enhance the military and security capacity of the 53-member African Union states, the fact that both the EU and the Pentagon were heavily involved in this process raises questions about the role of the leading imperialist states in usurping and misdirecting African political and military policy on the continent. The joint exercises culminated on Oct. 29 with a VIP ceremony in the U.S.-backed state of Ethiopia.

According to African Union Commission Chair Jean Ping of Gabon, “The command post exercise is the culmination of two years of engagement and partnership throughout the Amani Africa cycle of preparations and activities, designed to both contribute toward and validate the operational readiness of the African Standby Force. The ASF therefore lies at the very core of the efforts of the African Union to take ownership of and lead in matters related to peace, security and development in Africa.” (U.S. AFRICOM Public Affairs, Oct. 27)

AU officials noted in a press release posted on the AFRICOM website that progress related to the military exercises would not have happened without the help of its partners. Ping was quoted as saying, “Indeed, a popular proverb in Kirundi [language spoken in Rwanda and Burundi] states that, if you want to walk fast, you

should walk alone, but if you want to walk far, you should walk together.”

In specific terms the AFRICOM press release states, “The European Union has assisted the AU in its efforts, supporting various projects including development and preparation of the Africa Standby Force (ASF). U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) has also established a long-term partnership with the AU to provide communications links to the Africa Standby Force — part of the AU’s Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD).”

The Pentagon then details areas where it has provided assistance to the recently concluded military exercises. Staff Sergeant Amanda McCarty of the Public Affairs Division of AFRICOM noted, “U.S. AFRICOM has helped the African Union build its communications capability throughout the continent by establishing a Peace Support Operations Center in Addis Ababa; providing training to the PSOD; and integrating their activities into African Endeavor, a U.S.-led continent-wide communications exercise that allows African nations to gain experience communicating with each other and with the international community during an emergency. These activities were used to prepare the ASF for the Amani Africa CPS (command post exercise) and for future operations.”

These exercises simulated a “peace-support operation” in a fictional island of Carana, an area that is part of a subregion of the continent off the coast of the Horn of Africa. The scenario is based on combating a guerrilla group known as the Vrai Mouvement Patriotique de Carana, which is attempting to undermine the African Union Mission in fictional Carana.

The exercise is based on the VMPC gaining a foothold in one of the provinces of the fictional island and consequently launching attacks on civilians and recruiting youth into the guerrilla organization. The Amani Africa operation in-

tervenes to ostensibly restore peace and stability on the island.

One of the officers involved in the exercise, retired Nigerian Major General Samaila Iliya, said of the fictional operation in the AFRICOM release, “The African Standby Force itself is a key component in the management of crisis management. It is a component that must be robust. It has to be capable of undertaking a range of activities in terms of peace operations. If you look at the present environment, especially that of Africa, you’ll see there are quite a number of challenges, especially when it concerns peace and stability.”

### Exercise may signal large-scale intervention in Horn of Africa

It is quite interesting that this fictional scenario for Amani Africa takes place near the Horn of Africa, where the U.S. and other imperialist states have concentrated significant military resources in order to prevent the collapse of the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia as well as maintain Western influence in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya. The Islamic resistance organizations in Somalia, al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, are challenging the existing African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) that is largely unwritten and trained by the Pentagon.

In addition to the U.S. and European imperialist intervention in Somalia as well as off its coast — by stationing large flotillas of warships to purportedly fight piracy — the Pentagon and France both maintain military bases in the neighboring state of Djibouti. The U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs, recently delivered a major policy address at the Washington-based Center for International and Strategic Studies in which he called for greater military intervention in Somalia to prevent the collapse of the TFG.

Although the African Union’s stated purpose is to enhance political unity, eco-

nomie cooperation and national security within its member states, until there are clear objectives related to what constitutes genuine independence and sovereignty in Africa, imperialist states will continue to maneuver individual governments and regional bodies into projects that objectively undermine stability. There are numerous examples of U.S. interference in Africa that have resulted in coups, the theft of national resources and impeding economic development.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana and a leading theoretician and practitioner in the African revolutionary struggle of the 1950s and 1960s, called for the formation of an All-African High Military Command during this period. The distinction between what Nkrumah advocated and what appears to be happening today is that Nkrumah maintained that such a military alliance must be independent of neo-colonialism and imperialism.

In his book “Africa Must Unite,” published in 1963 on the eve of the formation of the Organization of African Unity (the forerunner of the African Union), Nkrumah stated: “I do not see much virtue or wisdom in our separate efforts to build up or maintain vast military forces for self-defense which, in any case, would be ineffective in any major attack upon our separate States. If we examine this problem realistically, we should be able to ask ourselves this pertinent question: which single State in Africa today can protect its sovereignty against an imperialist aggressor?”

With specific reference to the role of AFRICOM today, it’s instructive that in 1963 Nkrumah wrote: “If we do not unite and combine our military resources for common defense, the individual States, out of a sense of insecurity, may be drawn into making defense pacts with foreign powers which may endanger the security of us all.” □

## Cholera outbreak, lack of education

# More misery, fightback for Haitian people

By **G. Dunkel**

Ever since it took over the occupation of Haiti from a U.S., French and Canadian coalition in June 2004, the United Nations has spent billions of dollars on repressing the Haitian people. The U.N. has not addressed the huge, pressing needs of the Haitian people, basic needs like jobs, education and health care.

Many Haitians are charging that a recent cholera epidemic was spread by poor sanitation at a U.N. base at Mirebalais, which is located on a tributary of the Artibonite River. Shortly before the cholera outbreak was noticed on Oct. 19, a contingent of Nepalese soldiers, coming from an area of Nepal where cholera is common, rotated onto the base. (pacificfreepress.com, Oct. 28)

The U.N. has denied it had any role in the introduction of cholera into Haiti and said it was impossible to determine if the strain of cholera in Haiti is the same strain as the one in Nepal. The U.N. claims that it is in Haiti only to help the people and to preserve democracy.

However, The Associated Press sent reporters to the base in Mirebalais, where

they “found open and cracked pipes behind the base, with U.N. military investigators taking samples. There was an overpowering smell of human waste, and a pipe leading toward a septic tank was leaking foul-smelling black fluid toward the river.” (Oct. 29)

Haitian protesters marched on Oct. 29 to the U.N. base in Mirebalais, waving green branches and demanding that the U.N. soldiers leave. There was also an earlier demonstration on Oct. 22 against the U.N.

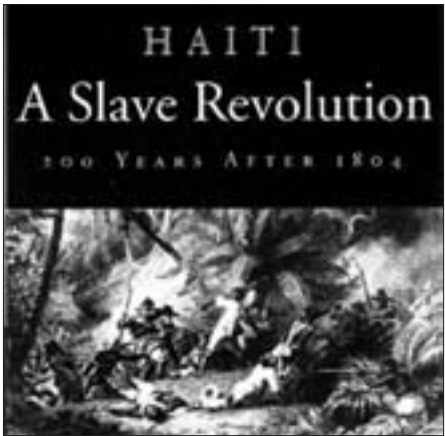
### ‘Education is a right’

Education has been a big issue in Haiti for a long time. It is almost entirely private, with schools run either for profit or by religious organizations. The head of the main teachers’ union in Haiti, speaking to a small group at the American Federation of Teachers national convention this past July, estimated that only half of the families in Haiti’s cities, and a much smaller percentage in the countryside, could afford the school fees.

The teachers’ union, UNNOH, has undertaken a campaign for universal education, which it acknowledges would not only benefit the children of Haiti but

would also provide jobs to its members. When it held a protest in front of the Ministry of Education on Oct. 8 to raise this issue, the Haitian cops attacked the demonstration and shot a math and physics teacher, Jean Filbert Louis, dead.

After his funeral on Oct. 22 at the church Dieu de Nazon, UNNOH and activists in Haiti’s social movement decided to hold a funeral march from the church to the Ministry of Education. The march, which had



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to confront a large contingent of French and Brazilian U.N. troops, turned into a protest against the U.N. occupation with chants of “Down with Minustah [the name of the U.N. troops]! Down with the occupation! The land of Dessalines does not belong to them! They must leave!”

Anger towards Haiti’s René Préval-led government also came out.

Finally, the U.N. troops attacked the march with tear gas and forced the marchers to abandon the casket bearing the teacher on the road.

The outcome of national elections for the Haitian president set for Nov. 28 is murky. Hardly any progress has been made on providing the 1.5 million Haitians left homeless by the Jan. 12 earthquake with jobs, or even clean water and latrines. Uncounted thousands of Haitians have lost all their documents, including their voters’ cards. The most popular party in Haiti, the Fanmi Lavalas of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide, has been denied a place on the ballot. The sudden outbreak of cholera has just added to the tensions.

One thing is crystal clear: The U.N. is not in Haiti to help the Haitian people. □



# El fraude hipotecario, los rescates bancarios siguen

Por Jerry Goldberg

El levantamiento de la “moratoria de ejecuciones hipotecarias” de los grandes bancos — que había sido instituido para detener la protesta sobre un fraude masivo en la tramitación de los documentos de ejecución hipotecaria — demuestra la necesidad de la clase obrera para lanzar una lucha para ganar una moratoria genuina de dos años en las ejecuciones hipotecarias y desalojos basada en la premisa de que la vivienda es un derecho humano fundamental.

Con el gobierno federal esencialmente habiendo nacionalizado la industria de la hipoteca, el presidente tiene la autoridad para aplicar una moratoria a través de la acción ejecutiva.

Bank of America, el 18 de octubre anunció su intención de reanudar las ejecuciones hipotecarias en los 23 estados que tienen las ejecuciones hipotecarias judiciales. El BOA había suspendido las ejecuciones hipotecarias en esos estados el 1º de octubre debido a las revelaciones de fraude en la tramitación de documentos de ejecución hipotecaria. BOA también anunció que reanudaría las ejecuciones hipotecarias en un par de semanas en los restantes 27 estados. Este movimiento es probable que anime a JPMorgan Chase y GMAC, quienes habían suspendido las ejecuciones hipotecarias de manera similar en los 23 estados de ejecución de una hipoteca judicial, para volver a tomar las casas. (New York Times, 18 de octubre)

Barbara J. Desoer, presidente de Bank of America Home Loans, declaró: “Hemos hecho una revisión a fondo del proceso y nos encontramos con los hechos que originaron la decisión de excluir han sido exactos. Nos detuvimos cuando estábamos haciendo eso, y ahora nos estamos moviendo hacia adelante”.

Mientras que incluso los comentaristas burgueses tratan este anuncio con el cinismo y la burla que se merecía, Bank of America se animó a hacer este movimiento con el respaldo del gobierno federal.

Desde el inicio de la exposición de fraude bancario masivo, el gobierno de Obama se ha opuesto a cualquier llamada para una moratoria nacional sobre las ejecuciones hipotecarias. Cuando David Axlerod, principal asesor del presidente Barack Obama, apareció en la CBS “Face the Nation” 10 de octubre, se pronunció contra una moratoria nacional. Fue seguido por el Secretario de Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano Shaun Donovan, quien publicó un artículo de 17 de octubre en el Huffington Post, que también rechazó las peticiones de una moratoria nacional, diciendo que dañaría a la economía.

## Miles de millones para los bancos

El Banco de América señaló que los titulares principales de sus hipotecas, Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac, han sido consultados durante el examen y la había firmado en la decisión de reanudar las ejecuciones hipotecarias. De los 14 millones de hipotecas el BOA dar servicios a la mitad de ellos — por valor \$2 billones (millones de millones) — son propiedad de Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac, las gigantes compañías hipotecarias controladas por el Tesoro de los EEUU. (NYT, 18 de octubre)

Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac eran las antiguas empresas patrocinadas por el gobierno, corporaciones privadas fletados por el gobierno federal para darles una posición privilegiada para comprar o respaldar la seguridad de los préstamos hipotecarios.

Sin embargo, en julio de 2008 Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac fueron tomadas por el gobierno federal debido a las pérdidas masivas en que incurrieron como consecuencia de la subida récord de ejecuciones hipotecarias causadas por las prácticas de préstamos fraudulentos y abusivos por los bancos. El gobierno federal colocó a Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac bajo tutela de la Administración Federal de Finan-

ciamiento de la Vivienda, que garantizó hasta \$200 mil millones de impuestos federales para respaldar sus préstamos. Esa cifra se elevó a \$400 mil millones, y ahora sigue sin tope.

Según un comunicado del 3 de junio 2009 por el director de la FHFA, James Lockhart, Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac poseen o garantizan el 56 por ciento de las hipotecas unifamiliares que valen \$5.4 mil billones en los EEUU. Cuando se combina con la Administración Federal de la Vivienda, la parte que garantiza o proporciona el gobierno federal, resulta en un increíble 75 por ciento de las hipotecas del país. (Associated Press, 9 de septiembre de 2008)

Lo que esto significa es que cuando un prestatario entra en ejecución de una hipoteca, el banco que hizo el préstamo recibe el valor total del préstamo por Fannie Mae o Freddie Mac. Además, el gobierno le paga al banco para procesar la ejecución de la hipoteca. Entonces el gobierno se hace cargo de la casa, desaloja al/la propietario/a y a los/as inquilinos/as si los hay, coloca la propiedad en el mercado, y la vende a una fracción del valor del préstamo.

La diferencia entre lo que el gobierno le pagó al banco por el préstamo, y por lo que vende la casa después de las ejecuciones hipotecarias y desalojos, es pagado por el pueblo que paga impuestos. Ese acuerdo equivale a un rescate encubierto de los bancos.

Por ejemplo, una casa en Detroit cercana a donde vive este escritor se vendió por \$137.000 en 2001. La casa se embargó, y Fannie Mae se hizo cargo del préstamo. La casa ahora está en la lista de Fannie Mae por \$31.000. La diferencia de 99.000 dólares entre los 130.000 dólares que aún se adeuda en la casa por la cual el banco recibió el valor total, y los \$31.000 por lo que Fannie Mae está vendiendo la casa, se abonarán a través de los fondos de los impuestos que paga el pueblo.

Este plan de rescate para los bancos, que ocurre con casi todas las ejecuciones hipotecarias, ya ha ascendido a \$145 mil millones.

Si bien la FHFA estima que el costo total de este plan de rescate será de \$221 a \$363 mil millones, en 2009 la Oficina Presupuestaria del Congreso estimó que Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac requerirán \$389 mil millones en subsidios federales hasta el año 2019. (Bloomberg News, 21 de octubre, 2010)

Los analistas de Barclays Capital Inc. ponen el precio tan alto como \$500 mil millones, y Sean Egan, presidente de Egan-Jones Ratings Co., estima que el rescate total a los bancos por parte de los/as contribuyentes a través de Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac, llegará a un total

de \$1 billón. (Bloomberg News, 13 de junio)

Estas cifras no incluyen los otros cientos de millones de dólares en subsidios federales a los préstamos respaldados por la FHA.

## Ejecuciones hipotecarios siguen sin alivio para dueños/as de casas

La administración Obama ha anunciado modestos programas de modificación de préstamo para ayudar a los/as propietarios/as tal como el Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP), a cambio de la continuación de este rescate masivo.

HAMP y otros programas presuntamente son obligatorios para los bancos. Pero los bancos no cumplen con su deber de ayudar a los/as dueños/as de vivienda de manera significativa. El gobierno depende de los bancos mismos para cumplir estas modificaciones, y el gobierno federal y la mayoría de las cortes se han negado a poner en vigor cualquier sanción a la negativa de cumplirlas.

Como los bancos saben que van a recibir el valor total de los préstamos después de la ejecución de la hipoteca, tienen poco incentivo para modificar los préstamos y han saboteado el HAMP, lo cual ha resultado en el colapso virtual del programa. Hasta agosto, menos de una sexta parte de los/as 3 millones de propietarios/as que presuntamente iban a ser ayudados/as, han recibido modificaciones de sus préstamos, y el número de prestatarios/as que les han sido ofrecidos/as modificaciones de prueba ha declinado drásticamente. (New York Times, 20 de agosto)

## Obama: ¡Declare moratoria ahora!

Hoy en día continúa intensificándose la crisis de las ejecuciones hipotecarias. Un número estimado de 2,8 millones de ejecuciones hipotecarias está proyectado durante 2010 en los Estados Unidos, con un total de 9 millones de ejecuciones para los años 2009 a 2012.

El total de riqueza de equidad de vivienda perdida debida a ejecuciones hipotecarias está previsto en \$1,9 billones para los años 2009 a 2012. (Center for Responsible Lending, 20 de agosto)

Las ejecuciones hipotecarias y los desahucios son resultado directo del alto desempleo persistente. Del millón de propietarios/as que recibió asesoramiento sobre ejecuciones hipotecarias a través del Programa Nacional de Asesoramiento sobre Mitigación de Ejecuciones Hipotecarias, el 58 por ciento señaló el desempleo como la causa mayor de incumplimiento de pago. (Housing Wire, 1 de junio)

Como el gobierno federal controla o respalda la gran mayoría de préstamos de hipoteca, el Presidente Obama tiene la autoridad de implementar una moratoria de dos años sobre las ejecuciones hipotecarias y desahucios relacionados a estas ejecuciones a través de una orden ejecutiva.

Una moratoria permitiría que los/as propietarios/as e inquilinos/as permanecieran en sus casas, estabilizaría las comunidades y daría tiempo para desarrollar una solución a esta crisis a largo plazo. Entonces se podrían restaurar los préstamos de vivienda a su propio valor y se garantizaría una vivienda para todos/as.

Debemos luchar contra cada ejecución hipotecaria y desahucio y comenzar a implementar una moratoria a través de la acción directa. Durante la Depresión de los años 30, las ocupaciones de casas revirtieron muchos desahucios y resultaron en leyes contra las ejecuciones hipotecarias en 25 estados, las cuáles fueron sostenidas como constitucionales por la Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos.

Lo que falta es que la clase trabajadora inicie una lucha masiva para ganar esta demanda. Ya es hora de luchar para cambiar la política del gobierno que da prioridad al bienestar de las instituciones financieras en vez del bienestar del pueblo.

*Goldberg es un abogado en contra de las ejecuciones de hipotecarias y un líder en la coalición basada en Detroit, Moratoria AHORA! Alto a las Ejecuciones Hipotecarias, Desahucios y Terminación de Utilidades.*

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